

***Ranunculus reconditus* Nels. & Macbr.**

obscure buttercup
Ranunculaceae (Buttercup Family)

Status: State Endangered, USFWS Species of Concern

Rank: G2S1

General Description: A showy, yellow-flowered perennial that grows 2-8 inches in height. Flowers occur at the ends of the tallest stems. Leaves occur along the flower-stalk as well as on shorter vegetative stems which originate at the base of the plant. The leaves are cut or incised into 3 distinct leaflets. The most remote portions of the leaflets are linear in shape. Flower and vegetative stems grow out of a tight cluster of shoots along the base of the ground. Petals are 3/8 to 5/8 inch in length. Mature achenes are not bristly, spiny or papillate; they are only moderately compressed.

Identification Tips: *R. reconditus* does not appear to co-occur with *R. glaberrimus*, the species with which it is most closely allied, although both taxa occur in Klickitat and Wasco counties. *R. reconditus* may be easily distinguished by its triterately dissected leaves; the leaves of *R. glaberrimus* are only shallowly lobed.

Phenology: Leaves emerge by the initiation of flowering in the first week of March. Peak anthesis typically occurs during the second and third weeks of March. Immature fruits are formed by late March and mature fruits have begun dispersing by mid-April.

Range: Upper elevations of the Columbia Hills in southcentral Klickitat County, WA and Mill Creek Ridge, OR in the Columbia Basin physiographic province.

Habitat: The species occurs in meadow-steppe habitat (Idaho fescue/houndstongue hawkweed association from Daubenmire 1970) dominated by perennial xerophytic bunchgrass and perennial broad-leaved herbs. Associated species include yellow bell (*Fritillaria pudica*), Douglas' buckwheat (*Eriogonum douglasii*), northern buckwheat (*Eriogonum compositum*), prairie lupine (*Lupinus lepidus*), balsamroot (*Balsamorhiza sagittata*), and cheat grass (*Bromus tectorum*). Occurs primarily on north facing upper slopes (0-20 degrees) and the crest of basalt ridges overlain by loess deposits of varying depth. Some plants can be found on all aspects. Elevation: 2240 to 3220 feet.

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Known distribution of
Ranunculus reconditus
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

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Elise Augenstein



WNHP



Reid Schuller

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Ecology: Like many other buttercups, this species flowers very early in the year (early March) when temperatures can still be quite cool. This may give the species some competitive advantage over other vegetation, both native and non-native, that grows and flowers later. The role of fire in maintaining the habitat is unknown, although the fire return interval is estimated to be 30-90 years.

State Status Comments: The species is restricted in WA to an area of less than 10 square miles. Portions of the historic range have been lost to or degraded by livestock grazing and agricultural practices.

Inventory Needs: Intensive inventory for this species has occurred in a fairly limited area. The Columbia Hills, the Little Klickitat River drainage, and other areas east of the Klickitat River should be more thoroughly inventoried.

Threats and Management Concerns: The primary land use within the species range is livestock grazing. The species response appears to depend on stocking levels, timing of grazing, proximity of available water, etc. The increasing number of noxious weeds is also of concern. Efforts to control non-natives will need to be carried out in a manner compatible with maintaining *R. reconditus*. Another concern is how the species will respond when a fire burns in the area. Due to suppression efforts, the amount of fuel (leaf litter) has built up, probably leading to a hotter fire than would have occurred historically.

Comments: This taxon is treated as *Ranunculus triternatus* in the *Flora of North America* (see below).

References:

Flora of North America Editorial Committee, eds. 1997. *Flora of North America North of Mexico. Volume 3 Magnoliophyta: Magnoliidae and Hamamelidae*. Treatment of the genus *Ranunculus* (p. 88-135) by A.T. Whittemore. Oxford University Press, New York. 590 pp.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson. 1964. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 2: Salicaceae to Saxifragaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle. 597 pp.